



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

MEMORANDUM

August 5, 2021

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Supplemental Appropriation: Head Start REIA #21-5

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice finds that Supplemental Appropriation #21-5 advances racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County by using Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to extend the Head Start program year. Such an extension of services is needed to address the ways the pandemic exaggerated existing racial inequities in the County, including limiting enrollment and full participation among income eligible Head Start children and families. Relevant research also suggests jurisdictions using ARPA funds designated for Head Start have the potential to address structural inequities by implementing a range of short and long-term strategies, including but not limited to the extension of the program year.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** Supplemental Appropriation #21-5 seeks to provide \$970,360 in American Rescue Plan FY22 funding for COVID-19 relief activities that support the County's Head Start children and families. This additional funding is needed to extend programming and reach children and families who were eligible in 2020 but were unable to enroll or fully participate because of the pandemic.

Early care and education (ECE) systems of which programs like Head Start are a cornerstone are—by design—positioned to disrupt histories of structural racism and address inequities in education, health and employment outcomes. Central to operationalizing this intention is equitably providing access to resources, opportunities,

and experiences that result in positive outcomes for children and families¹. Without such intentionality, race, ethnicity, language, nativity and disability of children will continue to disparately predict life outcomes. The Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) \$1 billion dollar funding of Head Start and additional funding across the ECE system presents a unique opportunity to strengthen and expand commitments to racial equity and make the ECE system fairer for all².

In December 2020, the Children's Equity Project released 14 priorities for dismantling systemic racism in ECEs. Recommendations addressed the role resource allocation, segregation, limited data collection and monitoring systems and inequities in the development and compensation of the ECE workforce have played in undermining positive impacts of ECEs. Based on this, the authors of the brief recommend funding Head Start to support "holistic, strengths-based and authentic integration, especially socioeconomic integration, across all aspects of programmatic operations, that results in diverse educators and administrators and culturally-affirming curriculum, pedagogy, and family engagement"³.

During the pandemic, families faced innumerable uncertainties and economic disruptions related to employment, transportation and childcare. In addition, it is well documented that people of color nationally and in Montgomery County have experienced disproportionately negative impacts from COVID-19. These impacts exaggerated existing inequities and left families of color more exposed to factors affecting children's attendance and participation in programs like Head Start. Currently, Head Start programs across the country are serving one-third fewer children than before the pandemic began⁴.

Given the important role Head Start programs play in the lives and educational opportunities of income-eligible children and families, ensuring consistent and or expanded access as envisioned in Supplemental Appropriation #21-5 is critical. Applying the Children's Equity Project's 14 Priorities to the use of ARPA funds confirms that

¹ Children's Equity Project. Start with Equity: 14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education. December 2020. Available at: <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-03/14-policies-equity-031521.pdf>

² Children's Equity Project. Start with Equity: Advancing Equity in Early Care and Education Systems with the American Rescue Plan Act. June 2021. Available at: <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-06/CEP-equityARP-052821.pdf>

³ Children's Equity Project. Start with Equity: 14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education. December 2020. Available at: <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-03/14-policies-equity-031521.pdf>

⁴ Office of Head Start. Administration for Children and Families. US Department of Health and Human Services. "FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Funding Increase for Head Start Programs: ACF-PI-HS-21-03. May 2021. Available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/pi/acf-pi-hs-21-03>

“increasing access to comprehensive services”⁵ by extending the Head Start Program year is a promising lever for advancing racial equity in ECEs. Additionally, according to available Policy & Regulation Guidance from the US Administration for Children and Families, Head Start grantees are also encouraged to prioritize programs for rising kindergartners, children with disabilities, children experiencing food or housing insecurity, children that were not able to receive any in-person services this year, or other areas determined by community needs⁶. Further, experts in the Education and Early Childhood Success Team at the National League of Cities explain the importance of leveraging local Head Start Parent Policy Councils in determining community needs⁷.

Overall, applying a racial equity lens to the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act funding in ECEs, presents a unique opportunity to address short-term and long-term priorities in Montgomery County, particularly in the County’s Head Start programs by building systems and strengthening services that advance racially equitable outcomes for children and families.

III. **DATA ANALYSIS:** In Montgomery County there are significant disparities in childhood poverty⁸. Using data and analysis from the Montgomery County 2018 Racial Equity Profile, in 2017 the percent of Latino children in poverty was four times the poverty rate of white children and the percent of black children in poverty was almost six times the poverty rate as white children. There are also disparities in poverty rates overall, noting however that the rates are higher for Black and Latino children than they are in the overall Black and Latino population. See chart below for details:

Poverty Rates in Montgomery County, 2017

Race/Ethnicity	Under 18	All people
White	3.4%	4.0%
Asian	5.8%	5.8%
Black	18.7%	11.2%

⁵ Office of Head Start. Administration for Children and Families. US Department of Health and Human Services. “FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Funding Increase for Head Start Programs: ACF-PI-HS-21-03. May 2021. Available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/pi/acf-pi-hs-21-03>

⁶ Office of Head Start. Administration for Children and Families. US Department of Health and Human Services. “FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Funding Increase for Head Start Programs: ACF-PI-HS-21-03. May 2021. Available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/pi/acf-pi-hs-21-03>

⁷ Anna White. “Supporting Early Childhood with the American Rescue Plan Act”. National League of Cities. May 2021. Available at: <https://www.nlc.org/article/2021/05/17/supporting-early-childhood-with-the-american-rescue-plan-act/>

⁸ Poverty is defined as where a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, which depends on family size but not geography. The federal poverty threshold for a family of four in 2017 was \$24,600. The poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as food stamps, public housing, etc.).

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Race/Ethnicity	Under 18	All people
Latino	15.8%	11.1%
Other	20.2%	14.6%

Source: Montgomery County Racial Equity Profile. Poverty Rates 2010, 2017. Table 14, pg. 67
Available at:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/RevisedOLO2019-7.pdf>

According to available information, there are currently 648 Head Start enrolled children in Montgomery County, representing 40% of eligible Head Start children. Of the children and families who are enrolled, the majority are Hispanic/Latino, and many are recent immigrants from Central and South America, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. At least 85% of enrolled families are between 100 - 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. Other than SNAP and WIC, most enrolled families did not receive other public assistance such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Social Security Insurance (SSI) during the most recent program year.

Anecdotal evidence about summer Head Start programming during COVID-19⁹ in Fargo, North Dakota, Guernsey, Wyoming and Havre, Montana demonstrates that extending the program year so that children and families can continue receiving educational, nutritional, health and family engagement services is particularly important given the uncertainty and stress families are experiencing during the pandemic.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive
Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

⁹ Office of Head Start. Administration for Children and Families. US Department of Health and Human Services. "Putting COVID-19 Funds to Work: Examples from the Field". July 2021. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/coronavirus/summer-programming>